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ABSTRACT

The director of career education and coordinator of the department of human growth and development at a private college implemented a practicum designed to expand the knowledge level of early childhood students in teacher training by requiring that they participate in the college's day care center. The primary purpose of the practicum was to improve students' competencies by means of hands-on experiences. A second aim was to expand the use of the center as a teaching tool. Activities included: (1) the coordination of the efforts of the teaching faculty, child care center director, and participating students; (2) establishment of a control group; (3) collection and analysis of data on students collected while students interacted with children; (4) development of a questionnaire and analysis of survey data; and (5) development of an interview format and analysis of interview data. Data indicated that many of the participating students characterized their experiences in the child care setting as rewarding or extremely rewarding. The use of the child care center as a teaching site was expanded. Student grades suggested that a satisfactory level of competence was reached by participating students. Related materials are appended, including questionnaires and study results. (RH)

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Utilizing Field Experiences in an Early Childhood Center to increase Competencies in Teacher Training

by

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NOVA UNIVERSITY

# Utilizing Field Experiences in an Early Childhood Center to increase Competencies in Teacher Training

by

Alfred L. Sutton

Cluster XX1

A Practicum (1) Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1988

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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This practicum report was submitted by Alfred L. Sutton under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

June 26,1988
Date of Final Approval of Report

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## Abstract

Utilizing Field Experiences in an Early Childhood Center to increase Competencies in Teacher Training. Sutton, Alfred L., 1988: Practicum Report, Nova University Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood.

Descriptors: Competency Based Teacher Education/Field Experience Programs/Preservice Teacher Education/Student Teaching/Teacher Education/Teaching Methods/Practicums/ Experiential Learning/Cooperating Teachers/ Student Teacher Supervisors/Student Teachers/Teacher Education Curriculum.

This practicum was designed to expand the knowledge level of early childhood students in teacher training by requiring them to participate in the College Drop-in Child Care Center as a supplement to their classroom work. The primary purpose was to improve their competencies through early directed and repeated hands on experiences. A second aim was to expand the use of the child care center as a teaching tool.

The writer coordinated the efforts of the teaching faculty, child care center director and the participating students; initiated a control group; collected and analysed data on students as they interacted with children in the child care center; developed an information questionnaire which was administered and analysed; and developed an interview format which was also conducted and analysed. Student involvement was evaluated by gathering and interpreting the information collected.

Analysis of the data revealed that many of the students who participated with children in the child care setting characterized their experiences as rewarding and extremely rewarding. Students in the control group did not participate in the child care center experience. However, they were seniors and all had experiences working with children. They also characterized hands on experiences working with children as rewarding and extremely rewarding. The use of the child care center provided an accessable teaching site for the practical application phase of the learning. Likewise, the child care center had supplemental assistance from students who had a basic understanding of child development. The use of the child care center as a teaching site was expanded. Student grades from a written assessment suggested that a satisfactory level of competency was reached by all of the students who were involved.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Description of the Work Setting and Community

The college is located in the inner city of a large middle Atlantic state. It is part of a two block square educational complex which includes an infant center, a day care center, an elementary school, a middle school, a senior high school and a four year college. The physical structure is a four story building, which was a public school annex classroom building, that has been renovated to become an administration building. The building was constructed in 1932 and does not have the convenience of an elevator. Classes are held from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and 7:35 p.m. to 10:05 p.m. weekdays and 10:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. on Saturdays in the adjacent senior high facility. The college is a commuter school serving the entire city. Additionally, two groups of students are driven in from communities as far away as 75 miles for Saturday classes. The students are striving for undergraduate degrees in Administration, Human and Social Resources or Human Growth and Development. Concentrations in these areas include: Business Administration, Health Care Administration, Cable

Administration, Criminal Justice, Social Work, Counseling, Gerontology, Early Childhood Education and Psychology. In 1985, the college successfully completed an accreditation review by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and by the State Board of Higher Education. Maximum accreditation of 10 years and 5 years, respectively, were received.

Many of the approximately 450 students who attend are parents working full time and looking for upward mobility, parents who have many experiences and are making a career change, or they may be single parents with limited work experience who want advantages for their families. The school population is approximately 65% female; 50% are single parents and over 90% minority. The average age of the population is thirty-two years.

The college, as a private independent institution, is now only eight years old. As such, it is still developing and becoming. There is a need to stabilize its financial base; it is adjusting the curriculum to satisfy needs of the marketplace; it maximizes and sometimes overextends expectations of personnel; and it is trying to expand revenue and resources. The strengths of the school are evident in the services it supplies: small class size, a trimester system, academic support services, evening and Saturday classes plus flexibility which provide availability of instruction for working and busy students. The use of adjunct

faculty, who are working in the field, insures a state-of-the-art basis for learning.

Additionally, the two trimester, upper level, required field placement experience mandates that all students have an opportunity to practically apply the theory learned in class.

An economic profile of the area indicates low income housing located on three sides of the educational complex. The fourth side includes an internationally known hospital that has tentacles embracing much of the land mass. City planning suggests the next subway system spur will connnect with the hospital. Although this will be in the 1990's, there are buildings which appear to be waiting for its coming. The area as a whole has high unemployment, a high percent of single parent homes and, like many communities, problems with drugs.

## Writer's Role and Responsibilities

Within this environment of a developing organization, full time personnel have several major responsibilities. The writer is (1) Director of Career Education and (2) Coordinator of Human Growth and Development academic degree area. This writer's responsibilities as Director of Career Education include: conducting career counseling and advisement, developing a career newsletter, maintaining and upgrading the career resource library, providing student placement, expanding the cooperative education program, monitoring student field placement

experiences, establishing job and field placement positions and disseminating job and career information. These charges are accomplished with the assistance of a job developer/field supervisor and a part-time secretary. The writer, as coordinator of the Human Growth and Development academic degree area, has responsibility for the programs in Early Childhood Education and in Psychology. Included in the myriad of tasks are: supervision and evaluation of seven adjunct faculty; the review, evaluation and development of content courses; counseling and advising upper level Human Growth & Development students, supervisor of student teacher placements; development of the trimester and yearly course calendar; instructor for the content area courses; assisting with developing faculty in-service training and coordinator of material related to teacher certification. These activities are pursued with the assistance of part-time secretary and a two day per week college work study student.

For the purposes of this report, only the responsibilities as Coordinator, Human Growth and Development are being addressed.

## Chapter II

## Study of the Problem

### Problem Description

Students majoring in Early Childhood Education were not afforded enough practical experiences early in their teacher training. They were introduced to theory but the opportunity to apply the theory was postponed until later in their matriculation. The junior level methodology courses presented some experiential exposure, however, the senior level student teaching experience represented the primary application focus. Typical students would have one observation practicum course during the sophmore year, peripheral exposure during the methodology phase and maximum involvement during student teaching. This arrangement did not afford them adequate opportunities for interaction with children in order to ascertain if they were pursuing the correct course of study. A number of students were teacher aides in public or private schools. They had years of experience but it was in the role of following directions, implementing someone else's plan, having responsibility for one or a few children plus being able to go home after school and not having to worry about school until the next morning. When they assumed the role of the teacher, all of that

changed. They had more responsibility, were obligated for all of the children, had accountability for record-keeping and for developing plans. Also, their work extended beyond the school day. Although many students thought the contrary, this transition, in many cases, was a difficult one. Earlier involvement in the role of teacher would have prepared them for the transformation or alerted them to the fact that they needed to pursue other directions.

An additional focus of the problem was the utilization of the drop-in child care service center. This center was available to students while they attended classes and in essence was a baby-sitting service. The desire of the students using the service was to have that time developed into child-centered quality time. Capitalizing on this desire required expanded use of the child care service service center as a teacher training facility.

Two statements that best explained the problems were:

1. Students majoring in Early Childhood Education did not receive adequate hands on teaching.
2. The drop-in child care center was under-utilized as a teaching facility.

## Problem Documentation

The College course selection offered Observation Practicum as a course where the student was in an observation and a participatory role in a child care setting. The only other course description where this took place was

in student teaching. The basis of this experience was that the student, over the course of twelve weeks, assumed increasing amounts of responsibility for classroom management, record-keeping functions, classroom design and classroom control. Therefore, according to the program structure, a student could have become prepared for student teaching with only one mandatory involvement with children.

As a part of the advisory function for upper level Human Growth and Development students, the coordinator assisted the students with developing degree plans, discussed their long and short term aspirations and conducted follow-up interviews. This information was documented on student record sheets. A review of these records for the 1986 graduating class showed that prior to student teaching all of the students felt that any experience as a teacher's aide was an advantage. After student teaching, those six who had backgrounds as teacher's aides, all stated that they had challenging student teaching experiences. Two of the six indicated that they had a rewarding, challenging but difficult student teaching experience; and one had a challenging but unsuccessful student teaching experience. Additional graduate follow-up records indicated that three of this group were hired as teachers. Of the remaining three, two chose not to follow teaching as a career. Further review of the 1984 and 1985 graduates records indicated that the majority of the Early Childhood Education major students

pursued child care service or teaching. Howbeit, a minority chose other avenues as their vocational quests. Some students, after participation in student teaching, decided that Early Childhood Education was not the chosen field for them.

Additional hands-on Early Childhood Education exposure prior to student teaching would allow students to change fields or take a minor. Students, like children, develop at different rates. Some take longer and need more hands-on experiences to internalize and strengthen their understanding of how children grow and develop. Although the developmental process is predictable, there are nuances to that prediction. The repeated involvement with children through observation and participation allows for clarity of understanding, comparison and analysis of growth and development characteristics and meshing of theory and practical application.

## Problem Analysis

The College is in its eighth year of operation. A two year period was allocated to a comprehensive self-study process. Ad hoc groups and self-study committees were formulated around academic programs and they discussed, suggested and recommended policies and procedures. An evaluation process was developed for the early childhood program which included: course development, review of accreditation and certification requirements, investigation of state and local laws and requirements, public relations,

student teaching process and placements, future trends, and marketing. The monitoring of this process was continuous and the results indicated that phases of development had to be prioritized in order to maximize the efforts. Although the College focus emphasized practical application of the learning theories, the stability of the program dictated that solidification start in other areas. Therefore, the thrust for the first phases addressed compliance with state and local laws, state certification, graduation requirements, course content, student teaching process and student teaching placements. The early childhood program had been in place long enough for there to be graduates. This allowed for longitudinal review of the structure, observation and analysis of the results. The self-study results indicated that the area of commitment should be maximizing the numbers and frequency of student-child contacts.

The drop-in child care service center was also the focus of discussion and review by the dean, assorted committees and numerous groups. Deliberations focused upon staffing, service on Saturday, children's snacks, space, funding, permanent location, program content, materials, equipment and coordination of services. In many respects, the center functioned like an outsider. Many of the suggestions and recommendations required additional personnel and/or additional resources. After the proposals and advisement, the implementation procedures which required personnel and resources were not initiated. Center

directors, four to date, conducted bake sales, dances, flea markets, raffles, cocktail sips, used manipulation and mild threats in order to expand their assets. Unfortunately, the longevity for the directors has been relatively short and this has impinged upon the continuity of activities. The latest force impacting upon the drop-in child care service center was the budget restraints which precluded the hiring of additional personnel. Expanded use of the center required creative use of existing means, cooperation and coordination.

## Literature Review

Review of the literature supported the premise that learning by observation when combined with practice contributes significantly to the acquisition of skills by students in teacher preparation. Student competencies were the desired result of teacher preparation programs. Briggs (1985) established that the development should include: (1) classroom discipline, (2) teaching methods and strategies, (3) human relations, and (4) evaluation. Leyser (1985) viewed the competencies necessary to prepare teachers for mainstreaming special need children. The skills determined were: (1) communication, (2) classroom management, (3) knowledge and (4) evaluation of student progress. Honig (1985) suggested that the character competencies expected for infant/toddler care givers were: (1) language, (2) rich environment, (3) knowledge of the curricum, and (4) training. A basic list of skills and competencies seemed evident for anyone functioning as a teacher of children. Student

understanding of any skill or teaching behavior should be tested through practical application once there is the teacher training program (Attmann, 1985). This view was amplified by the reports of Nutter (1983). Those findings showed that field experience interactions early in the program seemed to solidify the concentration choice and minimizes drop-out.

The cooperating teacher was another ingredient that augmented tremendously the acquisition of student competencies. Gills-Olion (1985) observed that modeling by the cooperating teacher significantly enhanced the internalization of concepts learned in the classroom. Also, demonstration followed by guided practice reinforced the learning behavior of student teachers (Grant & Kosela, 1985). Additional review by Bradley (1985) and Ervay (1985) supported the claim that field experiences incorporated into methods courses and assisted by demonstration classes enhanced learning. Copeland (1975) illustrated that a questioning skill was more likely to be used by a student teacher when the cooperating teacher modeled the questioning skill. Likewise, a teaching strategy was more likely to be adopted by a student teacher if it was modeled and promised to improve learning (Mohlmen, Coladarici & Gate, 1982). Results by Wedman (1985) indicated that the cooperating teacher developed a mentor relationship with the student.

Many educators have proclaimed the importance of field experiences in professional education. However, a concern

that accompanied this expansion was the need for equity of standards for student participation. McIntyre (1986) and Taylor (1985) established that standards for evaluation should include: (1) the kinds of experiences participated in, (2) the population of students involved, (3) grade level expectations, (4) experience variety and (5) supervision requirements for cooperating teachers. In addition, research on teaching and learning should be the basis for developing evaluation guidelines (Orteza, 1985). A team approach to developing evaluation is desired and should include the college community and the public school community (Caldwell, 1986).

Another aspect of teacher training programs that has been reviewed is the campus child care center and its involvement in teacher preparation. Campus centers are usually demonstration schools or centers which provide service primarily for the student population (Gulley, 1985). The Maryland State Board of Higher Education in conjunction with serveral institutions expanded three demonstration centers to establish three state wide teacher education center. (L. Cornell, Personal Communication, July, 1987). Drexel University, by contrast, made use of their campus center as a support service for students. The center management transferred from Home Economics to Food Service and Design, then to Human Behavior and Development and finally to the Human Behavior and Development departments. Throughout this transition, the purpose of providing student

support remained constant. (L. Baker, Personal Communications, August 1, 1987).

In summary, review of the literature emphasized a need for expanding field experiences starting with the freshman year; establishing a standardized format to assess the field placement experience; developing a criteria for cooperating teachers which included a required course in supervision; and developing curricula which has strong communication, class management, evaluation techniques and knowledge components. Also, the indications were that campus child care centers were effective resources in teacher preparation.

## Chapter III

## Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

### Statement of General Goals

Early and repeated interaction with children will provide people in early childhood education teacher training with a firm teaching foundation based upon internalization of established theories and experiential application of those theories.

### Behavioral Expectations

It was anticipated that by the end of the implementation process, students would satisfy the following criteria:

1. At least 90% of the students taking Early Childhood Education classes would be able to discuss the theoretical base of the classes in a practical context as measured by a written or interview questionnaire.
2. At least 75% of the students taking Early Childhood Education classes would be observed by this writer and supervised by the center director.
3. At least 30 of the students taking Early Childhood Education classes would have

interactive experiences working with children as measured by an interview or written questionnaire.

4. At least 75% of the students taking Early Childhood Education classes would have five course related interactive experiences in the drop-in child care service center as measured by an interview or written questionnaire.
5. At least 90% of the students taking Early Childhood Education classes would be able to apply the theoretical concepts as designed by the classroom instructor and evaluated by an evaluation instructor during mid-term and final examination.

Evaluation Instruments

Measurement of the objectives was through the use of an interview process and a written questionnaire process. These processes were designed to obtain the impact of the experiential involvement on the class content learning. A control class was used where no interactive experiences with children were a part of the treatment. The purpose of the control class was to compare the results of this group with the group of students who were involved with children as a part of their class work. The desire was to see if involvement with children had a positive impact on the students. A random sampling of students were interviewed

orally but all students received the questionnaire and all students participated in the evaluation. The evaluation questions were open-ended and took approximately forty-five minutes to complete (See Appendix B and H). Other devices were the student questionnaire and the sign-in monitoring sheet used in the drop-in child care service center. Students kept time sheets of their participation which was in one hour minimum blocks of time. The class instructor had assignments which required the students to participate in interactive experiences with the children. Twenty of the students who participated in the child care service center were observed by this writer. Data on each student is highlighted on the student profile form (See Appendix A).

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

A daily journal of events was kept by this writer. These events were reviewed and analysed on a weekly basis. The rationale for this approach was to determine if

1. unexpected events occurred;
2. activities were progressing according to the schedule;
3. revisions or alternatives were required;
4. there were changes in personnel or resources;
5. new knowledge had been acquired.

## Chapter IV

## Solution Strategy

### Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem of expanded field placement experiences to supplement the learning theory was addressed by a number of solutions. One strategy was devised by the Division of Elementary Education at the University of Georgia (Elmore & Cromartie, 1975). During the school year of 1973-74, field work undergraduate programs were in place at thirteen elementary schools. The schools were divided into competency based teacher education centers, field experience centers and teacher corps centers. Teams of professors and students assigned to the schools were assigned to work with the teachers and children. A survey was conducted in order to ascertain the perceptions and reactions to the field-based programs. The survey responses indicated that: (1) teachers perceived the field centered programs to be beneficial; (2) teachers felt the programs benefited pupils in that greater individualization of learning was possible; (3) students enjoyed their field-based contacts and experiences.

Another strategy was designed by East Texas State University (Richardson & Durward, 1982). One of three

education programs they initiated was the Bilingual Education Teacher Training Program which offered an interdisciplinary field-based systems approach to teacher education. Students acquired knowledge and skills in multi-ethnic awareness, bilingual teaching methods, language proficiency, measurements of student progress and research methodology through a competency based format. The students were assigned to limited English proficient children enrolled in the local school and supervised by the college faculty.

Still another approach was implemented by involving students in a ten week instruction period where students were required to spend two hours per week in a field site classroom for each professional education course in which they were enrolled (Holt, 1977). The conclusion reached was that the interaction of teacher trainees and instructors with public school personnel appeared to make the clinical based component of teacher education successful and rewarding.

The solution strategies highlighted different avenues used to solve the same problem. The approach devised by Richardson & Durward (1982) was not appropriate for this setting because bilingual education was not a focus. Likewise, the approach designed by Elmore & Cromartie (1975) was not relevant because of the use of teams of teachers, professors and students. However, there was similarity to the approach suggested by Holt (1977). It was

not a replication because the time of contact and population were adjusted variables.

## Selected Solution

The solution that was selected had the Early Childhood Education classes incorporate into their syllabi an activity which required the students to interact with children. The activity was developed and evaluated by the course instructor. These inclusions mandated that all Early Childhood Education students have interaction with children prior to their upper level courses. The drop-in child care service center became the hub of the expanded practical application phase of the Early Childhood Education classes. Students designated their five hours of required time on an appointment sign-in sheet. The appointments were made in the child care center for a minimum of one hour time segments. Monitoring was accomplished by a master sign-in sheet located in the center with individual time sheets kept by students. General guidelines that applied were:

1. assignments were assigned by the classroom instructor;
2. students in the center were under the supervision of the center director;
3. students were asked to provide other assistance in the center;
4. evaluation of assignments were accomplished by the classroom instructor.

This approach to satisfying the problem was justifiable because: (1) it made maximum use of resources; (2) it provided additional drop-in child care service center personnel; (3) it satisfied the College mandate; (4) it was cost efficient; (5) it provided students an accessible practical application resource; and (6) it addressed the expectations of a field based practicum.

## Report of Actions Taken

A series of events were accomplished prior to the implementation of the practicum. The following calendar lists the activities and the schedule of completions.

| Activities | Date to Begin | Personnel Involved | Date to End |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Final meeting with administration | Sept. | Dean/President | Sept. |
| 2. Final meeting with faculty | Sept. | Adjunct Faculty | Sept. |
| 3. Final meeting with child care center director | Sept. | Center Director | Sept. |
| 4. Designate the control class | Sept. | Adjunct Faculty | Sept. |
| 5. Conduct interviews Student profile | Sept. | Students | Oct. |
| 6. Disseminate questionnaire | Oct. | Students | Nov. |
| 7. Conduct Interviews | Oct. | Students | Nov. |
| 8. Conduct student observation | Oct. | Students | Nov. |
| 9. Collect questionnaire data | Nov. | Students | Nov. |
| 10. Compile data | Nov. | Students | Dec. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11. Analyse date | Dec. | Students | Dec. |
| 12. Determine the results | Dec. | Students | Dec. |

The dean, president and faculty were alerted early that a project was being considered and additional information was forthcoming. Thirty-one students were involved in the design which required that they participate in the child service center activities (See Appendix A). They were mostly female, many had some experience working with children, most felt that they had some knowledge of children and a large number were parents (See Appendix E). They were measured on their ability to understand concepts and demonstrate practical applicability by a teacher made written final examination.

The level of understanding was assessed as: A - outstanding level of understanding, B - above satisfactory level of understanding, C - satisfactory level of understanding and F - unsatisfactory level of understanding. The students were afforded the opportunity to acquire theory in the classroom and extend that knowledge through participation in the child service center. The process required students to contact the center director in order to reserve the day and times of their five, one hour minumun, participation sessions in the child care service center. A list of guidelines and expectations were given to all students prior to their participation. The guideline was developed in collaboration with the center director (See Appendix C). If a reservation

was missed the student was to contact the center director for a new day and time. It was monitored by a sign-in system. Students signed the sheet and reported to the center director prior to beginning their center involvement. The sign-in sheets were collected on a weekly schedule from the center director by this writer. They were reviewed and students who had missed oppointments were called and reminded that they had to reschedule.

A control group was used where the students did not participate in the child center involvement activities. The group was determined by self selection to a course. They were all female, had some experience working with children, felt they had some knowledge of children and they had children of their own (See Appendx G). They were given the same terminal interview questions and questionnaire. The purpose was to ascertain how they would respond without having the benefit of the field placement experience in the child care center.

The child care service center, which was developed to provide service while the student parents were involved in school activities, had involvement of thirty-four children. Table 1. shows that the ages ranged from two to twelve years.

Table 1. Child Care Service Pupil Demographics

| Ages (x) | Frequency (f) | Frequency (fx) scores |
|---|---|---|
| 12 | 1 | 12 |
| 11 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | 1 | 10 |
| 9 | 2 | 18 |
| 8 | 6 | 48 |
| 7 | 4 | 28 |
| 6 | 4 | 24 |
| 5 | 5 | 25 |
| 4 | 10 | 40 |
| 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 1 | 2 |
| X = 77 | N = 34 | $\Sigma fx = 207$ |

$$M = \frac{\Sigma fx}{N} = \frac{207}{34} = 6.0$$

$$Mdn = \frac{N + 1}{2} = \frac{35}{2} = 17.5 \text{ count up}$$

Mdn = 6.0

This age range afforded a wealth of information about human growth and development. In this instance, both the mean (M) and the median (Mdn) age were 6.0.

## Chapter V

## Results, Conclusions and Recommendations

### Results

The first objective addressed the students' ability to discuss the theoretical base of the class content in a practical context and was measured by a teacher made final examination. The grades ascertained are exhibited in table 2.

Table 2. Student Grades on the Final Examination

| Grade | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| A | 3 | 10% |
| B | 10 | 32% |
| C | 18 | 58% |
| F | 0 | 0% |

One hundred percent of the students involved were able to function at a satisfactory level.

The second objective focused on observation and supervision. All thirty-one students who participated in the child center activities were supervised by the center director. She set the tone for participation by initially clarifying the center procedures and disseminating the participation guideline sheet. Necessary adjustments or cancellations to the schedule were also provided by the

director. This observer, as a part of the observation process, investigated the students' purpose for participating, reviewed the interaction activity for that session, indicated the level of involvement, assessed whether it was an individual or group activity and recorded their reaction to the experience. Twenty different students were observed for a total of twenty-five one hour observations. This information is indicated in table 3.

Table 3. Writer Observation Schedule

| Time | Day | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mon (f) | Tues (f) | Wed (f) | Thur (f) | Sat (f) |
| 5:01-6:00 P.M. | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | |
| 6:01-7:00 P.M. | 2 | 2 | 2 | | |
| 7:01-8:00 P.M. | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| 8:01-9:00 P.M. | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| 9:01-10:00 P.M. | 1 | | | | |
| 10:00-11:00 A.M. | | | | | 1 |
| 11:00-12:00 Noon | | | | | 1 |
| 12:01-1:00 P.M. | | | | | 1 |
| 1:01-2:00 P.M. | | | | | 1 |
| 2:01-3:00 P.M. | | | | | |
| Totals | 8 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 4 |

N = 25 (f) = frequency

Students engaged in individual, small group and large group activities. Also included were: art projects, music

activities, student tutoring, community walks, physical education activities, discussion during snack time, and nutrition projects. Involvement for students necessitated an active participation with the child care center children.

The third behavioral expectation was that at least thirty of the students taking early childhood classes would have interactive experiences working with children. Thirty-one students actually participated in the design, representing 103% participation. However, the interview feedback data and student questionnaire were collected from only twenty-eight students (See Appendix B and H). Therefore, the feedback data collected represented 90.3% of the participants. Those students who were included in the design had an average age that closely adhered to the average age of students who attended the college (See Appendix D). The control group which had a smaller sample was not as close to the average age. The age ranges of both groups, however, were relatively close (See Appendix F).

The fourth objective stressed that five course related interactive experiences in the child care service center were required for three out of four students taking early childhood classes. A total of 170 hours of participation were clocked for the thirty-one students. Table 4 shows that all students participated for at least five hours and some contributed additional hours.

Table 4. Student Hours of Participation

| Students | Hours | Additional Hours | Total Additional Hours | Total Hours |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 8 |
| 3 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 21 |
| 6 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 36 |
| 21 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 105 |
| Total | | | | |
| 31 | 155 | 6 | 15 | 170 |

Montioring was accomplished through the sign-in sheet. This system provided tracking of student sharing as to day and time of working in the center. This system also provided checks and balances. There were two instances of disagreement over time completed. A review of the records clarified that the specified times had been reserved but they had not been implemented. A summation of the days and times of student assistance in the center is attested to in table 5.

Table 5. Student Participation Schedule

| Time | Day | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mon (f) | Tues (f) | Wed (f) | Thur (f) | Sat (f) |
| 5:00-6:00 P.M. | 18 | 19 | 16 | 4 | |
| 6:01-7:00 P.M. | 13 | 14 | 15 | 4 | |
| 7:00-8:00 P.M. | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | |
| 8:01-9:01 P.M. | 4 | 5 | 3 | 4 | |
| 9:01-10:01 A.M. | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| 11:00-12:00 Noon | | | | | 6 |
| 12:01-1:00 P.M | | | | | 5 |
| 1:01-2:00 P.M. | | | | | 5 |
| 2:01-3:00 P.M. | | | | | 4 |
| Totals | 43 | 45 | 40 | 17 | 25 |

N = 170

(f) = frequency

The fifth objective addressed the students capacity to apply in a practical situation the theoretical base of knowledge acquired in the class content. This objective and objective number one, which was directed at measuring the students ability to discuss the theoretical base in a practical context, were accomplished through a teacher made final examination. The one instrument was used to assess the students level of competence in understanding, discussing and

applying the knowledge obtained. The level of attainment is displayed in table 2.

## Conclusions

Objectives number one and number five were concerned with the students' ability to understand, discuss and to apply the knowledge acquired in the class. The 90% level required was surpassed because 100% of the students received a grade of "C"or better. A "C" grade represented a satisfactory level of understanding and application. Thirty students were designated as the number needed to participate. Thirty-one students actually participated in the project. These students all were involved with the child care service center and contributed a minimum of five hours of participation time. These results correlated favorably with Attmann (1985). Attmann contended that practical application should be included in the testing of student understanding of any skill or teaching behavior. Likewise, Nutter (1983) had findings which showed that early field experience interactions had a profound effect on retention of the concentration choice. Bradly (1985) and Ervay (1985) also voiced the opinion that field experiences assimilated into methods courses and enhanced by demonstration classes intensified the learning.

Objectives number three and four emphasized interactive exchange with children in a child care center. Several items were noted as a part of the student observation and discussions. Initially many students were reluctant and had apprehensions about their association with the child care center. Some students were at a loss as to what they would

learn through the experience. Three of these students later contributed more than the prescribed five contact hours. Table 6. describes their responses after their partnership with the child care center.

Table 6. Level of Reward

Students Assigned To Child Care Center

| | |
|---|---|
| Extremely Rewarding | 5 |
| Rewarding | 15 |
| No Opinion | 3 |
| A Little Rewarding | 3 |
| Not Rewarding | 2 |

A majority of the students received some dividend from their encounter with the child care center. This was achieved in spite of their earlier negative perception about the experience. Students in the control group, although they did not participate in the child care center, were also assessed as to their feelings about such an experinence. Table 7 is the report of their responses.

Table 7. Level of Reward - Control Group

Students With No Child Care Center Experience

| | |
|---|---|
| Extremely Rewarding | 2 |
| Rewarding | 3 |
| No Opinion | 1 |
| A Little Rewarding | 1 |
| Not Rewarding | 0 |

This group did not participate in the child care center. However, they were in agreement with the first group that field placement experiences were rewarding. The realities that this group was composed primarily of seniors and that all of them had experience working with children are viewed as important factors when determining why they saw field placement experiences as beneficial. Gulley (1985) was supportive of the concept that campus centers provided compensation for the student populations. The campus center at Drexel University was also a support service for teacher preparation which provided premium exhanges Baker (1987). Briggs (1985) proposed that field placement interaction was a desired part of teacher preparation. Grant & Kosela (1985) also demonstrated that guided practice reinforced the learning behavior.

Objective number two mandated that 3 out of 4 or 75% of students taking early childhood classes would be observed

participating in the child care center. Thirty-one students in total cooperated. Twenty different students were observed and five students were observed twice. The number denotes that 2 out of 3 or 65% of the students were observed. These observations contributed a wealth of information. However, the behavioral expectation was not met because 3 out of 4 or 75% was not satisfied. As exhibited by table 5, many of the student associations were clusterd around simular days and times. The large number of students participating during the same time and day minimized the observation opportunities.

Non verbal clues were effective expressions of positive experiences exhibited by the students who were observed. Some of the examples included: smiling, hugging the children, walking hand in hand with a child, bringing extra items from home and contributing time beyond the designated hour. These gestures stressed the humanistic qualities derived from the experience. Briggs (1985) underscored human relations as a necessary student competency. Wedman (1985) showed support when he expressed that cooperating teachers should develop mentor relationships with the student.

## Recommendations

Based upon the results of this practicum, the writer offers three specific recommendations. First, independent study courses in Early Childhood Education should have a component which requires a minimum of five hours of participation in the child care center. This activity should be a segment of a teacher made assignment which provides direction for student involvement.

Second, freshmen and sophomore courses in Early Childhood Education should have a component which requires the student to participate in the child care center. This activity should be a regular part of the class work assigned by the classroom instructor and included in the class syllabus.

Finally, a determined effort should be made to upgrade the capabilities of the child care center. The center should be a part of the design that provides for training of Early Childhood Education students. Curriculum should be designed for the center that is age specific.

It is the opinion of the writer that the required early involvement with children in the child care center will:

1. strengthen the skills of the students majoring in Early Childhood Education;
2. allow early identification by students who need to change their area of concentration;
3. make better use of the child care center as a learning tool.

## Dissemination

The practicum results were shared in several ways. First, the faculty members in the department were apprised of the results. There was discussion as to how activities using the child care center could be incorporated into course syllabi.

All department heads were apprised of the results and recommendations of the practicum. Several course requirements in Early Childhood Education are interdisciplinary courses and the review gave rationale and purpose to all the areas involved.

Finally, all College faculty were apprised of the practicum and its results through a presentation at the College Faculty Senate. A discussion period allowed for questions, answers and a clarification of the process.

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APPENDIX A



STUDENT PROFILE

1. Age Race Sex Classification

   Freshman_____

   Sophomore_____

   Junior_____

   Senior_____

2. Are you a parent _____? grandparent ____? guardian____? primary care giver ____? If yes, for how many _____?
3. Have you or do you work with children? _____
4. If yes, what kind of environment? day care _____? head start _____? public school _____? nursery_____? other_____?
5. What are your experiences mostly volunteer _____? mostly paid _____?
6. What was/is your level of responsibility? teacher_____? teacher assistant _____? program director _____? other_____?
7. Indicate how you feel concerning your general knowledge about children? Check one. expert___? great amount___? medium amount___? small amount____? little or nothing___?
8. How do you feel about working directly with children this trimester? should be extremely rewarding___? rewarding___? a little rewarding___? not rewarding ____? no comment___?
9. What do you consider a minimum amount of time to work with children during one trimester? (over 12 hours)___ (8-12

hours)___ (5-7 hours)___ (1-4 hours)___ (1 hour)___

10. How will working directly with children support your classroom activities? extremely supportive____ will provide support ___ will provide a little support ____ will provide no support_____ no comment_____

11. Comments:

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did you decide to major in ?
2. What experiences have you had with children?
3. How have you been able to apply what you have learned about children?
4. How can working directly whith children be helpful?
5. What experiences have you had working in the SDC child care center?
6. How might the child care center be more beneficial to you?
7. What suggestions do you have to make the child care center a better facility?
8. What additional services to the child care center do you think the school should provide?
9. What can you do to make the child care center a better place?
10. Should all courses require students to interact whith children? Why?
11. Should courses that require students to interact with children be placed only in the upper level?
12. How does it effect you when you take a course and then work with children?

## APPENDIX C



### GUIDELINES FOR CHILDCARE PARTICIPATION

1. Students participating in the child care center are under the supervision of the director.
2. Your involvement is an observational and a participative experience.
3. All students must sign-in to receive credit.
4. The director should know that you are in the center and ready to begin your activity prior to you starting.
5. Your involvement will be in one hour time segments.
6. Indicate to the director whether you will be working with (1) child, several children or a group.
7. The director may request, if needed, that you assist with other aspects of the center.
8. The assignment is generated by the classroom instructor.
9. The classroom instructor will be advised of participation times.
10. Address additonal questions to Alfred L. Sutton, Room 223B or extension 29.

# APPENDIX D

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

| Age(x) | Frequency (f) | Frequency Scores (fx) |
|---|---|---|
| 52 | 1 | 52 |
| 51 | 0 | 0 |
| 50 | 2 | 100 |
| 49 | 1 | 49 |
| 48 | 0 | 0 |
| 47 | 0 | 0 |
| 46 | 0 | 0 |
| 45 | 1 | 45 |
| 44 | 0 | 0 |
| 43 | 0 | 0 |
| 42 | 1 | 42 |
| 41 | 2 | 82 |
| 40 | 0 | 0 |
| 39 | 1 | 39 |
| 38 | 1 | 38 |
| 37 | 2 | 74 |
| 36 | 1 | 36 |
| 35 | 0 | 0 |
| 34 | 1 | 34 |
| 33 | 1 | 33 |
| 32 | 3 | 96 |
| 31 | 2 | 62 |
| 30 | 0 | 0 |
| 29 | 1 | 29 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 28 | 0 | 0 |
| 27 | 1 | 27 |
| 26 | 0 | 0 |
| 25 | 3 | 75 |
| 24 | 1 | 24 |
| 23 | 1 | 23 |
| 22 | 1 | 22 |

$M = \frac{\Sigma fx}{N} = \frac{982}{28} = 35$ $N = 28$ $\Sigma fx = 982$

$Mdn = \frac{n+1}{2} = \frac{29}{2} = 14.5$ count up

Mdn = 33.5

Student Classification

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Freshman | 10 | 35.7% |
| Sophmore | 6 | 21.4% |
| Junior | 9 | 32. % |
| Senior | 2 | 7 % |
| Undecided | 1 | 3.6 % |

Male-Female Percentages

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 2 | = 7% |
| Female | 26 | = 93% |

External Range

| H | L |
|---|---|
| 52 | 22= 30 |

## APPENDIX E



### STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

Experienced Working With Children

Yes - 18 64.2%

No - 10 35.7%

Kinds of Experiences

Head Start 3 Private School 0

Public School 12 Day Care 3

Other 0

Experience Classification

Teacher 2 Teacher Assistant 6

Substitute Teacher 5 Classroom Aid 2

Parent Volunteer 3 Other 0

Self Assessment of Knowledge About Children

Expert 4

A Great Amount 8

A Medium Amount 12

A Small Amount 2

Little or Nothing 2

Is Student A Parent

Yes - 22

No - 6

# APPENDIX F

## CONTROL GROUP STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

| Age (x) | Frequency (f) | Frequency Score(fx) |
|---|---|---|
| 59 | 1 | 59 |
| 58 | 0 | 0 |
| 57 | 0 | 0 |
| 56 | 0 | 0 |
| 55 | 0 | 0 |
| 54 | 0 | 0 |
| 53 | 0 | 0 |
| 52 | 0 | 0 |
| 51 | 0 | 0 |
| 50 | 0 | 0 |
| 49 | 0 | 0 |
| 48 | 0 | 0 |
| 47 | 0 | 0 |
| 46 | 0 | 0 |
| 45 | 0 | 0 |
| 44 | 0 | 0 |
| 43 | 0 | 0 |
| 42 | 0 | 0 |
| 41 | 1 | 41 |
| 40 | 0 | 0 |
| 39 | 0 | 0 |
| 38 | 0 | 0 |
| 37 | 1 | 37 |
| 36 | 1 | 36 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 35 | 1 | 35 |
| 34 | 1 | 34 |
| 33 | 1 | 33 |

N = 7 $\quad \Sigma fx = 275$

$$M = \frac{\Sigma fx}{n} = \frac{275}{7} = 39$$

$$Mdn = \frac{n+1}{2} = \frac{8}{2} = 4 \text{ count up} \qquad Mdn = 36$$

Student Classfication Center

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Freshman | 2 | 28.6 % |
| Sophmore | 0 | ---- |
| Junior | 0 | ---- |
| Senior | 5 | 71.4 % |
| Undecided | 13 | --- |

Male female percentages

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 0 | 0% |
| Female | 7 | 100% |

External Range

| H | L |
|---|---|
| 59 | 33 = 26 |

# APPENDIX G

## CONTROL GROUP STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

Experienced working with children

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes - | 7 | 100% |
| No - | 0 | 0% |

Kinds of experiences

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Head Start | 1 | Private School | 2 |
| Public School | 3 | Day Care | 1 |
| Other | 0 | | |

Experience Classification

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher | 1 | Teacher Assistant | 2 |
| Substitute Teacher | 2 | Classroom Aide | 1 |
| Parent Volunteer | 1 | Other | 0 |

Self assessment of knowledge about children

| | |
|---|---|
| Expert | 1 |
| A great amount | 5 |
| A medium amount | 1 |
| A small amount | 0 |
| Little or nothing | 0 |

Is student a parent

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes - | 7 |
| No - | 0 |

## APPENDIX H

### STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your level of knowledge about young children?

   excellent___ above average___average___below

   average___poor___.

2. How many times did you participate in the SDC Child Care Center?

   0 times___1-2 times___3-4 times___5 times___above 5

   times___.

3. How was your interaction in the SDC Child Care Center?

   extremely rewarding___ rewarding___ no effect ___ a

   little rewarding___ not rewarding___.

4. Has your level of knowledge about young children changed with this experience?

   changed greatly___some change___not effect___ a little

   supportive___ not supportive___.

5. Did working directly with children support your class work?

   extremely supportive ___ supportive___ no effect ___ a

   little supportive___ not supportive___.

6. How were your experiences working with the children?

   extremely positive ___ positive ___ not effect ___

   negative___ extremely negative___.

7. Did your expectations about working with children change as a result of participating in the SDC Child Care Center?

   changed greatly___ changed___ no effect___ a very little

   change___ no change___.

8. Has this experience helped you with your interactions with children in your immediate environment?

   extremely helpful___ helpful___ no effect___ a little

helpful___ not helpful___.

9. What age children did you interact with at the SDC Child Care Center?

   2 yrs or under ___ 3-4 years old ___ 5-6 years old ___

   7-8 years old ___ over 8 years old____.

10. What other environments have you participated in?

    Day Care___ Head Start ___ Public School ___ None ___

    Other ___.

11. Comments